

## PLATE VI.—THE SILVER FIR AT ROSENEATH.

THE Silver or Female Fir is the most beautiful and graceful of all its numerous tribe. It is common in the mountainous parts of Scotland, where, as Evelyn justly observes, "are trees of wonderful altitude, which grow upon places so inaccessible and far from the sea, that, as one says, they seem to be planted by God on purpose for nurseries of seed, and monitors to our industry; reserved, with other blessings, to be discovered in our days, amongst the new-invented improvements of husbandry, not known to our southern people of this nation. Did we consider the pains they take to bring them out of the Alps, we should less stick at the difficulty of transporting them from the utmost parts of Scotland."

The Silver Fir represented in the plate is the property of his Grace the Duke of Argyll. It is about ninety feet in height. In girth it is twenty-two feet four inches at one foot from the ground, and seventeen feet five inches at five feet from the ground. Its solid contents are estimated at six hundred and nineteen cubic feet ten inches; but this calculation is probably only an approximation to the truth. The age of the tree is unknown: the introduction of the Silver Fir into Scotland is however commonly understood to have taken place two hundred and twenty years since, which period corresponds very well with the size of this tree, when compared with others of the same species, the ages of which are known. Evelyn mentions two Silver Firs in Harefield Park, Middlesex, "that being planted there anno 1603, at two years' growth from the seed, are now (1679) become goodly masts. The biggest of them from the ground to the upper bough is eighty-one feet, though forked on the top, which has not a little impeded its growth. The girth or circumference below is thirteen feet, and the length, so far as is timber, that is, to six inches square, seventy-three feet. In the middle seventeen inches square, amounting by calculation to one hundred and forty-six feet of good timber."—*Silex*, p. 204. edit. 1776.

This quickness of growth is only one of many recommendations in this beautiful species of Fir: but it is one of great importance in regard to planting it in avenues, and near houses; for which it is equally calculated by the graceful stateliness of its form, and the beauty of its foliage, presenting on one side the bright green of the emerald, and on the other a delicate relief of silvery stripes, which, when agitated by the wind, gives it an agreeable variety of appearance.

## PLATE VII.—THE SCOTCH FIR AT DUNMORE.

THOUGH the Fir will grow in all parts of the kingdom, and is as useful in clothing the barren wolds of Yorkshire as the rugged mountains of Scotland, it perhaps nowhere attains such perfection as in the latter country; particularly in those situations in the Highlands where it is most exposed to a northern aspect; for in proportion to the tardiness of its vegetation, in consequence of the little influence of the sun upon it for months together, it completes by slow and sure degrees the health and strength of its timber far beyond that which is nurtured to prematurity of stature in richer soils and warmer situations.

This remark may be applied to all other timber trees as well as to the Fir. Pliny observes, that such as grow in moist and sheltered places are not so close, compact, and durable, as those which are more exposed. And Homer, who like Shakespeare had read the book of nature as well as that of humanity, judiciously assigns to Agamemnon a spear formed of a tree which had braved the fury of the tempest: he also puts into the mouth of Didymus the express reason for this choice; "because," says he, "it becomes harder and tougher in proportion as it is weather-beaten." The wise Chiron shows the same prudence in choosing a spear for Achilles from a mountain tree:

"Alone, untouch'd, Pelides' jav'lin stands,  
Not to be poised but by Pelides' hands:  
From Pelion's shady brow the plant entire  
Old Chiron rent, and shaped it for his sire;

Whose son's great arm alone the weapon wields,  
The death of heroes, and the dread of fields."  
ILIAD, b. xvi.

Nevertheless that the Fir can so readily be forced to speedy growth is an advantage in many respects. Evelyn mentions one which "did shoot no less than sixty feet in height, in little more than twenty years:" he, therefore, who may be waiting impatiently to see his newly-erected mansion enveloped in the graceful shade and salutary shelter which only stately trees can give, will do well to cultivate

"Cedar, and Pine, and Fir, and branching Palm;"